

Childhood Immunization

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What is childhood immunization?

Childhood immunization is the administration of a vaccine that enhances the resistance of a child's body to communicable diseases. Vaccines are biological substances that produce protective antibodies to safeguard the child's body from the real disease germ.

Why is childhood immunization an important health issue for Detroiters?

Vaccines are responsible for the control of many infectious diseases that were once common in this country. Vaccines have reduced, and in some cases, eliminated, many diseases that routinely killed or harmed infants, children, and adults. However, the viruses and bacteria that cause vaccine-preventable disease and death still exist and can be passed on to people who are not protected by vaccines. Vaccine-preventable diseases have a costly impact, resulting in doctor visits, hospitalizations, and premature deaths. Sick children can also cause parents to lose time from work.⁵

Children under 5 are especially susceptible to disease because their immune systems have not built up the necessary defenses to fight infection. By immunizing in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, a child can be protected by age 2 from disease and help protect others at school or daycare. Children need immunizations (shots) to protect them from childhood diseases. These diseases can have serious complications and even result in death. Vaccines prevent the following diseases:

- Measles
- Mumps
- Polio
- Rubella (German Measles)
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough)
- Diphtheria
- Tetanus (Lockjaw)
- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib disease - a major cause of bacterial meningitis)
- Hepatitis B
- Varicella (chickenpox)
- Pneumococcal disease (causes bacterial meningitis and blood infections)

The following vaccinations are recommended by the CDC and MDCH by age two and can be given over five visits by a health provider:

- 4 doses of diphtheria, tetanus & pertussis vaccine (DTaP)
- 4 doses of Hib vaccine

- 3 doses of polio vaccine
- 3 doses of hepatitis B vaccine
- 4 doses of pneumococcal vaccine
- 1 dose of measles, mumps & rubella vaccine (MMR)
- 1 dose of varicella vaccine

The Michigan Vaccines for Children program, as part of a federal vaccination program, provides free vaccines for underinsured children.

Immunization Rates in Detroit

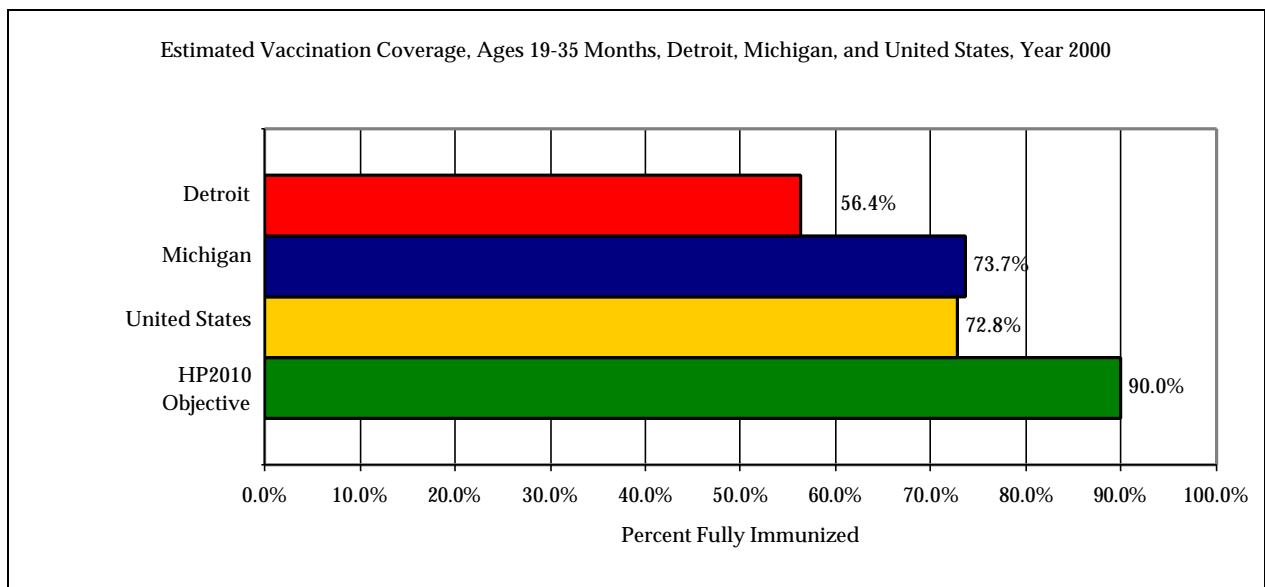


Figure 5

An examination of ages 19-35 months, however, gives a more complete impression of children who are able to access immunization and be protected in a reasonable amount of time while still young. Figure 5 depicts estimated coverage according to the response of those who participated in the 2000 National Immunization Survey (NIS).[†]

[†] The NIS data provide current, population-based, state and local area estimates of vaccination coverage. It is a means of measuring progress toward goals to increase immunization coverage for American children. As well as evaluating progress towards national vaccination goals, the CDC uses the NIS data to identify states with the highest and lowest rates. Detroit is one of 27 urban areas that are monitored through the NIS.

A few cautions to note when using this data. The NIS is conducted by random telephone interview, and the information received during the telephone interview is confirmed with the child's provider. Statistical methods are used to adjust for children whose parents refuse to participate, those with intermittent access to telephone service, or those whose immunization histories cannot be verified through their providers.

As shown, while Michigan and the United States are pretty close in the percentage of 19-35 months of age who have been immunized (73.7% and 72.8% respectively), Detroit children have had less coverage (56.4%).⁶ HP2010 seeks to increase to and maintain 90% vaccination coverage levels for universally recommended vaccines among children aged 19-35 months.